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DEPARTMENT FOR ANDREW STEINFELD
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USUN FOR PHEE

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SUBJECT: PRC/AFRICA: CHINA'S NEW SPECIAL ENVOY FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS TO VISIT SUDAN SOON

REF: BEIJING 3117

Classified By: Political External Unit Chief Edgard Kagan. Reasons: 1. 4 (b/d)

¶11. (C) Newly appointed PRC Special Envoy for African Affairs Liu Guijin will travel to Sudan shortly, MFA West Asian and North African Affairs Deputy Division Director Weng Meihui said, adding that his division is working on the logistics of the trip. Weng echoed the MFA's public line that Liu will initially focus on Darfur and, down the line, likely promote the China-Africa strategic partnership and follow-up on last November's Africa China-Africa Summit. Describing the Special Envoy as a "senior position that is fully backed by the PRC government," Weng said the MFA will be able to more quickly and more adroitly coordinate with international counterparts, such as the United States and the United Nations, on Darfur, Weng said.

South African Embassy Perspective

¶12. (C) Liu's appointment to the newly-created position of "Special Envoy for African Affairs" was announced during the May 10 regular MFA press briefing (reftel). Liu was recently Ambassador to South Africa and previously served as Director General for African Affairs and Ambassador to Zimbabwe. A Counselor at the South African Embassy in Beijing described Liu as a strong, assertive diplomat. South Africa also believes that Liu's primary focus for the near term will be Darfur and has not heard about broader responsibilities for the role, the Counselor said.

French Embassy View

¶13. (C) Earlier this year, the Chinese told the French that the PRC paid "close attention" to the appointment of Special Envoy Natsios and mulled creating a senior-level counterpart for Natsios, senior United Nations officials and other countries involved in Darfur, according to French Embassy Political Counselor Erkki Maillard. Liu will be able to focus on Darfur full-time, relieving the burden on Assistant Foreign Minister Zhai Jun, whose portfolio also covers the Middle East. The creation of the Special Envoy position indicates the MFA has the lead on Darfur, Maillard asserted. The French believe the PRC's Ambassador in Khartoum wields relatively significant influence on Sudan policy and believe that he has a previous relationship with Liu, which may have

been a factor in Liu's selection. Maillard commented that PRC Ambassadors in Africa appear to have greater input into policy than PRC ambassadors elsewhere. The PRC's Africa policy establishment, including government officials and heads of state-owned enterprises, is still relatively small and insular, our French contact observed.

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